



**MINUTES OF
THE REGULAR MEETING
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MAY 11, 2026**

PRESENT: Matt Mauer, President
Alisa Lee, Vice President
Carla Santorno

REMOTE: Andrea Smith
Bronwyn Clarke

IN THE CHAIR: Matt Mauer

PLACE: Center at Norpoint, 4818 Nassau Ave NE Tacoma, WA 98422

The regular meeting of the Metropolitan Park District Board of Park Commissioners was called to order at 6:00 p.m. President Mauer read a land acknowledgement.

STUDY SESSION 2026 BOND PACKAGE NEXT STEPS

Chief Planning Officer Marty Stump provided an update to the Board of Commissioners on the 2026 Bond Program. He expressed appreciation to voters for approving the measure, which will provide approximately \$155 million in capital funding for parks and infrastructure improvements across the system. Marty Stump reported strong public support, citing a 77% approval vote, which he said reflects community confidence in Parks Tacoma's facilities and services.

Mr. Stump outlined that the bond program was shaped through extensive community engagement and includes investments across more than 40 parks citywide. The focus is primarily on repairing and rehabilitating existing facilities, rather than expanding the system significantly.

A guiding principle of the program, Marty Stump noted, was maintaining the overall tax rate at current levels. He added that the 2026 bond program builds on the delivery structure established under the 2014 bond program, ensuring continuity in capital project execution.

Looking ahead, Marty Stump stated that staff will now develop detailed project sequencing and implementation plans. While voters approved \$155 million, funding will be issued over time through a structured bond sale process spanning approximately six years. The first issuance is currently estimated at \$45 million by the end of 2026, with potential initial sale activity as early as August, depending on financial conditions.

He noted that approximately \$25–30 million from the 2014 bond program remains active, creating overlap between bond cycles. Coordination with Chief Financial Officer Tania Wink and her team will ensure readiness for issuance and fiscal alignment.

Marty Stump outlined upcoming Board touchpoints, including a CIP quarterly update in July 2026 and an initial sequencing plan for capital projects. More detailed project prioritization will be incorporated into the 2027–2028 budget process. He described key factors guiding project sequencing, including shovel readiness, prior design progress, community need (including safety and accessibility), partnership opportunities with the City of Tacoma and Tacoma Public Schools, and operational efficiencies that reduce long-term maintenance costs. As an example, Marty Stump referenced planned upgrades to spray ground systems, including replacing non-recirculating systems to improve water efficiency and reduce operating costs. He then highlighted early and shovel-ready projects, including improvements at Portland Avenue Park, Peck Community Sports Park, Titlow Park (North Hidden Beach Bridge replacement), and South Park spray ground and restroom upgrades. Additional early work includes continued investment at Point Defiance Park and design work for a new Penguin exhibit at the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

Marty Stump also noted planned connectivity and greenway improvements aligned with a forthcoming City of Tacoma levy focused on pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Additional projects include restroom and shelter replacement at Jefferson Park and a new off-leash dog area at Norpoint Park, currently in early environmental review and expected to reach final design later this year. He referenced potential land acquisition and joint-use opportunities with Tacoma Public Schools, including a possible partnership at Browns Point Elementary to enhance park access and amenities.

Marty Stump concluded by outlining next steps, including finalizing the implementation schedule, coordinating bond issuance timing with financial advisors, and expanding capital program staffing. He also noted plans for improved public-facing communications tools to track bond project progress.

Commissioners then raised several questions including planned improvements at the Norpoint Community Center; Marty Stump responded that work will begin with a facilities condition assessment to identify priority architectural and systems needs before implementation. Commissioners asked about the timeline for the off-leash dog park. Marty Stump stated the project will require roughly 6–8 months for design and permitting, with construction and completion expected in mid-to-late 2027.

Commissioner Clarke asked how the bond program aligns with the District’s community investment commitment to support local businesses. Marty Stump responded that Parks Tacoma, Tacoma Public Schools, and the City of Tacoma are coordinating procurement strategies to maximize local participation within state public works requirements, including small works rosters and subcontracting opportunities.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS CONNECT TACOMA BALLOT MEASURE FACTS & INFORMATION

This item was postponed until a June Board meeting.

PRESIDENTS REPORT

President Mauer provided a report to the Board and community members focused on the District's current financial challenges and related governance actions.

President Mauer acknowledged that many attendees were aware of ongoing budget concerns and stated that the past year has been difficult for staff, Commissioners, and the community. He noted that the District experienced rapid post-pandemic growth that, in his view, outpaced the organization's capacity and systems. He explained that a decentralized organizational structure did not provide sufficient fiscal oversight during this period of growth, contributing to the current financial shortfall. As a result, Parks Tacoma is now facing a significant budget gap that will affect existing programs and services.

President Mauer clarified that the Norpoint Community Center meeting was part of a scheduled annual series of community meetings at District facilities, not a dedicated budget hearing. However, he acknowledged the budget situation as the primary concern and addressed it directly in his report.

He outlined the District's biennial budget structure, noting that the 2025–2026 budget was adopted in fall 2024. Subsequent review identified a significant shortfall in the 2025 operating budget, which required an amendment, and earlier faulty revenue projections were also carried into 2026, compounding the issue.

President Mauer reported that reserve funds were used to cover shortfalls in Parks and Recreation and administrative operations. As a result, the District must reduce spending by at least 9 million dollars to balance the budget and rebuild reserves. He emphasized that this will require difficult decisions, including potential layoffs and program reductions.

President Mauer distinguished operating funds from capital funds, noting that while the bond measure received strong public support, those dollars are legally restricted to capital projects and cannot be used for staffing or ongoing operations. President Mauer also noted that the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium operates under an enterprise fund model and is largely self-sustaining through its own revenues, and therefore is primarily insulated from general fund reductions.

President Mauer then outlined the upcoming public process, including multiple Board meetings in May and June to consider budget reduction options. He referenced prior Committee of the Whole meetings on April 20 and May 4, and a special Board Meeting & Public Hearing scheduled for May 18 that will include a public hearing. He encouraged public participation through in-person attendance, online participation, or written comment to the Board Clerk.

President Mauer stated that delays in achieving savings may require deeper cuts later, and noted that some operational reductions could begin as early as the end of the month, with formal Board action expected in June. He directed the public to additional information available on the District website outlining the budget challenges and potential options.

Turning to corrective actions, President Mauer stated that the Board is pursuing an independent internal auditor, expected to begin work around June 1, with an initial focus on reviewing financial practices and identifying contributing factors to the current situation. He also reported that the District is centralizing key administrative functions, including finance, human resources, communications, and IT, to strengthen oversight and internal controls. In addition, President Mauer announced the creation of a Board Finance Committee to review quarterly financial statements, monitor reserves and debt, and oversee budget and intergovernmental financial matters.

Finally, President Mauer addressed leadership transitions, noting that the Board and the former Executive Director agreed to part ways. He stated that Gwen Voelpel was appointed Interim Executive Director on April 29, and that the Board is reviewing additional external candidates for a six- to nine-month interim role during a stabilization period while a long-term search is conducted.

President Mauer concluded by reaffirming that the Board welcomes public input on the budget and broader District matters.

STANDING COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL REPORTS

Business & Responsive Agency Advisory Council

Commissioner Santorno reported that the BRAAC Committee met on May 8th to review the District's financial challenges and related deficits. She summarized staff's presentation as thorough and transparent, outlining contributing factors and potential remedies, with strong engagement and questioning from commissioners. She noted that the committee expressed confidence in staff's analysis. BRAAC Chair Doug Andreassen issued a letter reaffirming that confidence and identifying three priorities moving forward: addressing process failures, strengthening organizational culture to prevent recurrence, and enhancing BRRAC's oversight role.

Commissioner Santorno highlighted key next steps, including action on an interim Executive Director, continued public engagement through the May 18th public hearing process, adoption of a 2026 budget amendment by the end of June, and advancement of an independent internal audit. She also noted BRRAC's recommendation to review the Meadow Park Golf Course as part of the broader financial evaluation.

Nature & Environment Advisory Council

Commissioner Lee reported that the Nature and Environment Advisory Council met the previous week and received a presentation on the updated draft Urban Forest Plan. She noted that a public workshop on the topic is scheduled for May 19th .

Joint Municipal Action Committee

President Mauer reported on the Joint Municipal Action Committee (JMAC), which includes representatives from the City of Tacoma, Port of Tacoma, Tacoma Public Schools, and Parks Tacoma. He stated the committee met the previous Friday to discuss coordination across interagency agreements and shared priorities.

He noted that Interim Executive Director Gwen Voelpel attended the meeting and that budget challenges were a key topic of discussion, along with continued collaboration among partner agencies.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Interim Executive Director, Gwen Voelpel commented on the following:

- The Larchmont Elementary Community Schoolyard Project was completed in spring 2026, with a ribbon-cutting celebration scheduled for May 13.
- Parks Tacoma will celebrate the 16th annual Kids to Parks Day throughout May, offering more than 20 family-friendly outdoor events across Tacoma in partnership with the National Park Trust.
- Fort Nisqually Living History Museum will host a Queen Victoria’s birthday celebration featuring cannon fire, Victorian-era activities, music, dance, croquet, and afternoon tea.
- Meadow Park Golf Course is hosting the West Central District 3 and 4A Boys and Girls Golf Championship with more than 160 student athletes.
- Meadow Park recently hosted World Hickory Golf Day, with over 40 participants using traditional hickory golf clubs.
- Regional Parks partnered with community organizations to host a Japanese Children’s Day celebration at the Pagoda, attended by approximately 1,000 people, including local Japanese business representatives.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Mitsu Sakamura expressed appreciation for Parks Tacoma. She raised concerns about unclear cancellation and refund policies after a class they registered for was canceled and requested clarification on how refunds are handled.

Sandy Hust advocated for more senior programming at Norpoint Center and raised concerns about frequent equipment outages. She said limited access to functioning machines impacts older users significantly. She emphasized the need for reliable equipment and earlier senior class times.

Sandy Smith described the cancellation of a long-standing senior fitness class due to staffing and liability concerns. She explained that participants have been forced to relocate off-site to continue their program with their long-time instructor. She asked for more flexibility to preserve established senior classes.

Michael McSweeney shared historical context about the Norpoint Center’s origins and its importance to the community. He highlighted the value of its programs for seniors, youth, and families. He also praised staff leadership for supporting inclusive and high-quality programming.

Lincoln Nielsen, an 8th grader, urged continued support for Club B, emphasizing its role in providing opportunities not available in school. He shared that participation in drama and other

activities has helped him build skills and community. He encouraged preservation of these programs for youth development.

Corbin Schmidt shared that Club B and Teen Late Night helped him discover new interests, including music, and provided meaningful enrichment. He emphasized the programs' role in building community and positive engagement for youth. He asked that they remain available for future students.

Kai Stone supported Club B and Teen Late Night, noting participation in drama and music opportunities. He emphasized that these programs offer creative experiences not available in school settings. He expressed concern about losing access to these outlets.

Michelle Hoglum thanked staff member Lisa Ellson for clearly addressing concerns raised by participants in a dance class. She explained that initial confusion about expectations was resolved through helpful communication and adjustments. She emphasized appreciation for responsive staff leadership.

Bob Wynn, representing Breakwater Marina, requested continued dialogue with Parks Tacoma leadership about marina operations and transition planning. He emphasized the need for both short- and long-term solutions that support all stakeholders. He expressed willingness to collaborate on next steps.

Anne Smith spoke as a parent whose child participates in Club B and Teen Late Night programs. She highlighted benefits including safety, enrichment, and skill development for youth. She suggested scheduling adjustments as a potential way to sustain the programs.

William Felimore expressed concerns about financial oversight, transparency, and accountability within Parks Tacoma. He questioned bond management, audits, and budget practices, and raised skepticism about fiscal decisions. He argued that improved financial responsibility is needed.

Michael Marchetti, speaking for Breakwater Marina stakeholders, opposed proposed tenant and boathouse changes. He raised concerns about displacement, financial loss, and lack of alternative marina space. He urged consideration of economic and community impacts before decisions are made.

Martine Roudier, a prospective boathouse buyer, requested clarification on policies affecting privately owned boathouses at Breakwater Marina. He expressed concern about uncertainty regarding long-term moorage and potential removal requirements. He asked for clear guidance before finalizing a purchase.

Cindy Beierlein praised Norpoint Center programming improvements and staff responsiveness, particularly under current leadership. She emphasized the importance of senior programming and social connection opportunities. Her only concern was the need for better chairs in the facility.

Candace Cooper requested improvements to the sound system for a step class due to difficulty hearing instructors. She also asked whether future improvements at the People's Community

Center would be included in levy-funded upgrades. She emphasized the importance of facility improvements for participants.

Catalina Rodriguez questioned the source and oversight of a reported financial shortfall and asked how it was not identified earlier. She raised broader concerns about budget monitoring, accountability, and transparency in public spending. She requested clearer explanations of financial management processes.

Jennifer Stone spoke as a parent supporting Club B and Teen Late Night, emphasizing their value for youth development and leadership opportunities. She highlighted student participation in advisory groups and the positive impact of these programs. She urged continued funding to avoid losing these benefits.

Don McPherson expressed concern about the potential displacement of an elderly liveaboard resident at Breakwater Marina. He emphasized the urgency of providing clear plans and communication for affected residents. He asked the board to help ensure stability and avoid homelessness impacts.

Natalie Isaacson, an 8th grader, shared that Club B and school sports provide a safe and supportive environment. She emphasized the importance of funding for uniforms, equipment, and access to activities. She asked that these programs continue to be supported.

Leona, a middle school student, supported Club B and Teen Late Night as safe and supportive spaces. She emphasized their importance for students who may not have safe environments elsewhere. She asked that the programs not be discontinued.

Eric Arntz opposed the proposed dog park, citing concerns about environmental impact and proximity to wetlands. He argued the project may disrupt wildlife and is unnecessary in a residential area. He encouraged prioritizing environmental preservation over development.

Kaylee Raynor, a drama teacher at Meeker Middle School, strongly supported Club B, describing it as essential for sustaining theater programming. She explained that it enables productions, funding, staffing, and expanded student access. She emphasized its social-emotional importance and warned against funding cuts.

MINUTES OF APRIL 27, 2026 REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Commissioner Santorno moved to adopt the minutes as presented; seconded by Commissioner Lee and passed on a vote of 5-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

RESOLUTION NO. C27-26: APPOINTING TIMOTHY ANDERSON, ELLEN CHAPPELKA, JOSHUA STOVALL, HEATHER MOMYER, PETE REYES AND REAPPOINTING HUNTER HENDERSON, LAURA CASTRILLI AND KATE WAIND TO THE NATURE & ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Commissioner Santorno moved adoption of the consent agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner Lee.

Being no additional comments, the question was called and the consent agenda passed on a vote of 5-0.

PURCHASING RESOLUTIONS None

PUBLIC WORKS PURCHASING RESOLUTIONS None

SINGLE READING RESOLUTIONS None

FIRST READING RESOLUTIONS None

SECOND READINGS RESOLUTIONS None

NEW BUSINESS None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS None

BOARD COMMENTS

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to Washington State Law (RCW 42.30.110) for the Board recessed for 2 hours to discuss potential litigation, and to evaluate the qualifications of an applicant for public employment.

Following return from Executive Session, the Board reported discussion of candidates for the Interim Executive Director position at Parks Tacoma. Commissioners noted that multiple qualified candidates were considered, with emphasis on leadership experience and crisis management.

A motion was made to direct staff to begin drafting an employment agreement to appoint Tony Piasecki as Interim Executive Director for an interim term. The motion was seconded and discussed, with Commissioners expressing support for Mr. Piasecki's experience, particularly in crisis management and organizational stabilization during a period of financial and operational transition. It was also noted that interim support staff would remain in place to assist during the transition period.

The motion passed by roll call vote. The Board confirmed direction to proceed with contract development for the appointment.

ADJOURN

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

President

Clerk

Submitted by: Jennifer Bowman, Board Secretary